



School-to-Work:

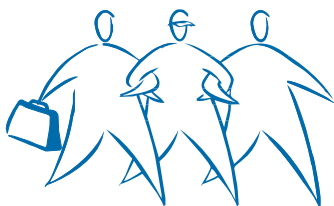
Strategies to Expand Students' Horizons

WORK-BASED LEARNING



MANY students say school is more engaging when they see how their course work relates to the world outside the classroom—and to their futures. When they make that connection, students say they spend more time on their studies and, ultimately, do better in school. Work-based learning is one strategy for providing students with this sense of relevance.

Work-based learning takes many forms. At one end of the spectrum is job shadowing, which gives students opportunities to observe an adult at work. At the other end are more intensive experiences, such as internships and apprenticeships, that reinforce classroom lessons and also teach new skills that are required for particular careers. Each type of activity provides a way for students to see workplaces in action and explore future career options.



Thousands of students, teachers, businesses, and schools participate in work-based learning. This brief provides some interesting data about their involvement, as well as strategies to help practitioners develop or expand work-based learning opportunities for students.

What Does Work-Based Learning Look Like in Practice?

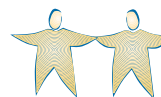
Here's a sampling of the variety of work-based learning strategies that are being used in schools and businesses around the country:



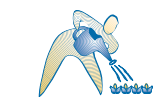
Job shadowing—Students learn about the demands of a particular job, and generally see what it's like to be an adult in the workplace, by spending part of a day or a longer period of time observing an employee on the job. This activity usually occurs in late middle school or early high school.



Mentoring—Students are assigned to an adult mentor, inside or outside the school, who acts as an adviser, motivator and constructive critic. Ideally the mentor is in a career the student finds interesting and models the skills and knowledge required for that career.



Cooperative education—Students alternate their high school or postsecondary studies with a job in a field related to their academic or occupational objective. Using written training and evaluation plans to guide their instruction, teachers give students course credit for both classroom and work experience. This structured method of work experience has deep roots in U.S. high schools.



School-based enterprises—Students learn about business by actually operating one. Whether on or off campus, the enterprise is always part of the school program. Students get to experience all aspects of the business.



Internships—Students work for an employer for a specified block of time to learn about a particular industry or occupation. Because the experience is tied to school work, they may receive academic credit. They also may be paid for their time.



Service learning—Students volunteer to perform community service in programs that equally emphasize learning and caring. Their volunteer experiences are integrated with academic course work.



Youth apprenticeship—Students learn job skills and reinforce academic lessons under the guidance of a mentor in a specific occupational area. This experience is designed to lead students directly into either a related postsecondary program, entry-level job or registered apprenticeship. Students may or may not be paid for their time.

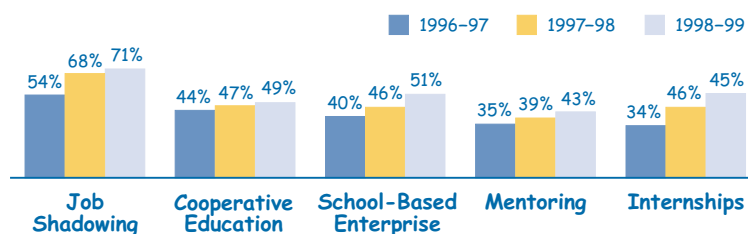


Registered apprenticeship—Students participate in on-the-job training and related classroom instruction to gain skills and knowledge for a particular occupation. These programs meet specific, federally approved standards and are registered through the federal Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training or a State Apprenticeship Council.

Schools Get to Work

Each year, through partnerships among educators, businesses, and other community groups, more and more schools are offering students the opportunity to participate in work-based learning.

Schools Offering Work-Based Learning Activities*



*Data represented in this brief are collected from school-to-work partnerships that voluntarily participate in national surveys.

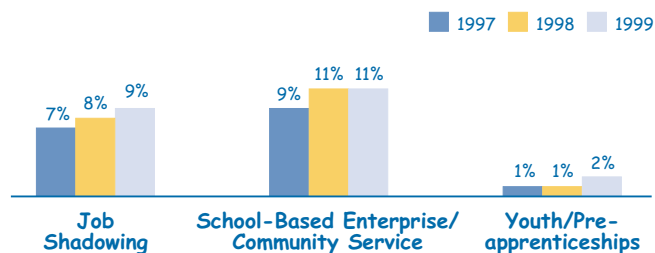
SOURCE: E. Medrich et al. (forthcoming). *School-to-Work Progress Measures, A Report to the National School-to-Work Office for the Period July 1, 1998-June 30, 1999*. Berkeley, CA: MPR Associates, Inc.

Student Participation



Student participation in work-based learning is growing slowly but steadily. The increase is likely to continue as more partners commit to the intensive planning required for effective work experiences that are tied to a student's course work.

Secondary Students Participating in Work-Based Learning



SOURCE: Medrich et al. (forthcoming). *School-to-Work Progress Measures*.

Down to Business

Work-based learning is made possible with the support of tens of thousands of businesses that open their doors to students each year. Across the country, more than 130,000 employers participated in work-based learning in 1998–99. Small, private employers provide the most support, which is not surprising given that most American businesses employ fewer than 50 workers.

Private Businesses Offering Work-Based Learning

	1996–97	1998–99
Total Number	110,970	134,681
Percentage by Business Size		
Small	47%	47%
Medium	20%	18%
Large	4%	4%
Unknown size	29%	32%

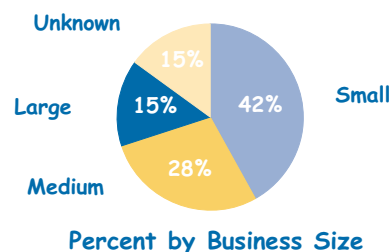
SOURCE: Medrich et al. (forthcoming). *School-to-Work Progress Measures*.

Not Just for Students

Firsthand observation of a business in action can help teachers understand how skills and knowledge are applied on the job and keep them up-to-date on new and emerging fields. More teachers are getting this experience through internships in which they spend two or more weeks at a work site learning specific skills or rotating through various jobs. Teachers use what they have learned to improve their instruction.

Teacher Internships Offered by Private Businesses, 1998–99

Total Number of Internships:
22,135



SOURCE: Medrich et al. (forthcoming). *School-to-Work Progress Measures*.



EXAMPLES THAT WORK



These work-based learning strategies were selected from a website maintained by the National School-to-Work Office. This website encourages the sharing of STW strategies, methods and techniques from practitioners throughout the country. To get contact information for these and other examples, or to search the rest of the database, go to www.stw.ed.gov/cover.htm.

Comprehensive Partnership

Grade-point averages are rising for students involved in Edgerton High School's nationally recognized youth apprenticeship program. A partnership between the Wisconsin high school, Memorial Community Hospital and Blackhawk Technical College offers work-based learning activities such as hospital tours as early as kindergarten and culminates in the Distinguished Youth Apprenticeship Program in Health Services. Students who complete that program have shown marked improvements in GPA, career decision-making and overall self-esteem. Five groups of graduates have pursued health care careers.

Career Paths for At-Risk Students

High school students in Arizona, California and Nevada who might have become drop-out statistics have gained new career direction in Southern California Edison's Job Skills Partnership Program. The eight-year-old program targets juniors and seniors who need more guidance on their direction after high school. After 40 hours of orientation, the students rotate every six weeks through a different mentor and craft, such as welding, machining, electrical, operations, warehousing, chemical lab, instrumentation, mill mechanic, and test tech. The GPAs of all participating students have improved.

Work-Based Learning in Rural Areas

Finding enough work-based learning opportunities for all students who want them can be a challenge even in cities and suburbs with lots of businesses because of the commitment and coordination involved. It's even tougher in rural areas with few employers. The Alamo Navajo Community School in Magdalena, New Mexico, has managed to find paid work experiences for all its seniors even though the students, 98 percent of whom are Native American, live in an isolated area of high unemployment. In four years, the percentage of graduating seniors finding work or pursuing higher education has increased from 10 percent to 65 percent.

Showing Their Commitment

West Virginia's Mineral County is serious about providing work-based learning for all students. All 10th grade students study work-based learning in a required "career majors" class, and 11th and 12th graders experience a Career Day. All graduates of Mineral County schools must complete a work-based learning experience. Field trips for primary and middle school students now emphasize careers associated with the places they visit. A Work-Based Learning Advisory Committee facilitates communication among elementary, middle and high schools, and business representatives.



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This brochure is part of a series designed to focus on the individual elements that make up a successful school-to-work system.